

REMARKS

Reconsideration of the present application, as amended, is respectfully requested.

I. STATUS OF THE CLAIMS

Claims 1-17, 26 and 27 are currently pending. Claims 15-17 have been allowed. Claims 2, 9 and 26 have been amended to more particularly point out and distinctly claim that which Applicants regard as their invention. In particular, claims 2 and 9 have been amended into independent claim form to include all of the limitations of claim 1 in order to expedite prosecution of the present application. In addition, claims 1 and 27 have been canceled herewith without prejudice.

Support for the above amendments may be found throughout the specification as originally filed. No new matter has been added by virtue of this amendment. It is also submitted that no new issues have been raised by this amendment which require further consideration and/or search.

II. 35 U.S.C 103(a) Rejections

Claims 1, 26 and 27 have been rejected as being obvious over applicants admitted prior art (AAPA).

In response, Applicants disagree with the Examiner. However, it is submitted that the above rejections are now moot in view of the amendments made to the claims herewith.

In the instant Office Action, it has been indicated that claim 2-14 are each drawn to allowable subject matter and would be allowable if rewritten in independent form to include all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. As noted above, claims 2 and 9 have each been amended into independent claim form to include all of the limitations of claim 1. Thus, for at least the reasons set forth above, removal of the objections to claims 2 and 9 is requested. Also, as claims 3-8 depend from amended claim 2 and claims 10-14 depend from

amended claim 9, removal of the objection to these dependent claims is likewise requested. Lastly, as claim 26 now depends from amended claim 2, removal of the rejection to this dependent claims is also requested.

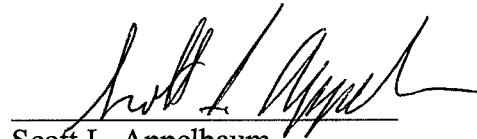
It is noted that the above amendments were made for the purpose of expediting prosecution of the present application and in no way constitute an admission regarding the merits of the above rejections.

III. Conclusion:

In summary, applicants respectfully submit that the instant application is in condition for allowance. Early notice to that end is earnestly solicited.

If a telephone conference would be of assistance in furthering prosecution of the subject application, applicants request that the undersigned be contacted at the number below.

Respectfully submitted,



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